Psychological First Aid - a set of principles developed as a means to respond briefly and efficiently to people in crisis.

In the current pandemic, we are all facing psychological distress. Everyone is affected, either directly or indirectly. Understanding these principles is important in our roles as teachers, but also for ourselves.

Apply the following care principles to yourself first. Only then will you have the resources left to support you students and others.

Productivity during pandemic crisis
This is not business as usual. When we shift to new ways of doing, the change comes at a cost. This is not a personal failure, it is a computational limitation of the human brain.

Aims:
- Enhance sense of control
- Reinforce good personal choices and positive coping strategies
- Encourage to seek support from others in social network

Core Principles: The 3 L’s

Look
- Give full attention when speaking with someone.
- Observe reactions

Listen
- Active listening - concentrate on what is being said rather than just passively ‘hearing’ the message of the speaker and acknowledge you heard what they said.
- Caring & showing empathy

Link
- Practical assistance with:
  - Problem-solving
  - Help to access basic needs
  - Refer to other resources for further assistance
Take-home suggestions:

- Being aware of power dynamics in a dialogue is important.
- Realize that we are in a situation where work and life expectations are modified.
- Talk about networks that people have for support, including friends, partners, family, etc.
- There can be a lot of anxiety related to a sense of ‘being responsible’ for others (employees, familial, etc.), but it is important to consider how you are taking care of yourself as well.
- Be aware that the medium in which the conversation is taking places changes the dynamic. For example, cues are more perceivable via real time conversation versus email. Even between a phone call, zoom call and face-to-face conversation, non-verbal cues are more/less perceivable.
- Normalizing the situation is very helpful and comforting.
- Many in the McGill community have a natural inclination to go into problem-solving mode, but just listening is important.
- Recognize that just focusing on listening can be hard sometimes.
- It can feel helpless to not have all the answers or how to fix every problem. We don’t have the power to change the unchangeable, only to take care of ourselves as best we can.
- Connecting to our own networks for support and comfort is important.

Resources:

- Source of info for this presentation by Red Cross (English): https://reliefweb.int/search/results?search=Remote+Psychological+First+Aid+during+the+COVID-19+outbreak
- Webinar and links from RRSPQ-RS (French): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovq_qgqtlX4k&feature=youtu.be
- Private company providing recommendations for digital tools and apps for managing pandemic-related distress: https://www.therappx.com/covid-19/